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ISRG Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)
ISRG PUBLISHERS
Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Arts Humanit Soc Sci
ISSN 2583-7672 (Online)
Journal homepage: https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjahss
Volume -1 Issue-1V (July-August) 2023
Frequency: Bimonthly

Unearthing Ancient Tamil Civilization: The Historical Significance of the Keeladi Archaeological Excavation

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| **Received:** 30.07.2023 | **Accepted:** 01.08.2023 | **Published:** 03.08.2023

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Abstract

The Keeladi archaeological excavation, a significant site in Tamil Nadu, India, is presented in detail historically in this study. The discovery's significance, historical significance, and effect on our comprehension of ancient Indian civilizations are all covered in this article. In order to understand the site's urban nature, well-designed streets, drainage systems, and residential structures, the research recounts the site's discovery in 2015 and following methodical excavations. The results disprove prior theories regarding the age and cultural sophistication of South Indian prehistoric communities and close the gap between literary texts and archaeological evidence. Additionally, the study covers the items, ceramics, and inscriptions discovered, offering insights into trade connections, social and cultural activities, urban design, and language growth throughout the Sangam era. Overall, the Keeladi excavation has been an important step in understanding Tamil Nadu's and India's pasts, adding to our knowledge of early Indian history and the interconnectedness of ancient civilizations. For the benefit of future generations, India's cultural heritage is being preserved and honored via continuous research at Keeladi.

Keywords: *Keeladi, archaeological, excavation, Historical, significance, Cultural heritage.*

Introduction:

Through the analysis and interpretation of the physical remains left behind by ancient civilizations, the study of archaeology helps to solve the mysteries of the past. In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu's Sivagangai District, Keeladi is one such remarkable archaeological site. The Keeladi excavation has challenged and reshaped our understanding of early Indian history by revealing priceless insights into the past and culture of the prehistoric Tamil civilization. Keeladi has become a focus for archaeologists and historians, offering vital insights into the daily life and culture of a pre-Sangam society. Due to its archaeological significance, which sheds light on the ancient civilisation that previously flourished in the area, the site has attracted attention and garnered historical significance. This article delves into the historical perspective of the Keeladi archaeological excavation, exploring its significance, findings, and its impact on our understanding of ancient India.

Discovery:

The Keeladi site gained notoriety in 2015 after local farmers discovered artifacts while excavating for a building project. While excavating the foundation, workers discovered old ceramics and artifacts, which aroused the curiosity of the local authorities and historians. A group of archaeologists led by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) started conducting systematic excavations at the site as word of the unintentional discovery spread. Archaeologists became interested in these relics, which led to the official start of excavations. A group of archaeologists from the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department under the direction of K. Amarnath Ramakrishna made the initial discovery of the Keeladi site in 2015. The initial excavations started in 2018 and have continued ever since in various stages. In 2019, Dr. R. Sivanandam, a renowned archaeologist, began new excavation activities, which have since produced a plethora of historical data

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about the area. Keeladi has grown into one of India's largest archaeological sites over time, defying preconceived notions about the age and level of cultural sophistication of the ancient societies on the Indian subcontinent. The find included clay figurines, ceramics, beads, and other artifacts that suggested the presence of an old settlement. A full-fledged excavation was started in 2019 to investigate the size and depth of this archaeological site in light of the find's potential significance. The discoveries at Keeladi have the potential to reshape our understanding of ancient Indian civilizations and their cultural, economic, and social complexities.

Importance and Historical Significance:

The Keeladi excavation has provided new insights into Tamil Nadu's history and culture, an area that had a major influence on the development of early Indian civilisation. Redefining our understanding of early Indian civilizations has been made possible in large part by the discoveries at Keeladi. The Keeladi hamlet serves as a vital link between the megalithic period and the Sangam age because it is thought to have existed during the Sangam era (3rd century BCE to 4th century CE) and probably much earlier. Prior to Keeladi's discovery, literary works and scant archaeological evidence were the main sources of information about Tamil Nadu's ancient past. The discoveries at Keeladi have filled this gap and given verifiable proof that the historical accounts from the Tamil Sangam literature are accurate.With the help of the tangible evidence discovered at Keeladi, the Sangam literature, which comprises poems and epics from the same time period, now has a more specific context. It provides a clearer understanding of the daily routines, traditions, and social systems of the prehistoric Tamil people. The site's urban setting further refutes the notion that Tamil Nadu in the past was largely a rural region. The fact that Keeladi is suggests the existence of a flourishing civilisation with cutting-edge urban planning, trade, and cultural contacts. The discovery of Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions is the most important result of Keeladi's excavation. These carvings on bricks and ceramics reveal important details about the language, script, and writing systems that were prevalent at the time. It has made it possible for historians to chart the development of the Tamil language and offers hints about historical social and cultural customs. The site's artifacts and buildings provide evidence of a highly developed and organized urban area with impressive town planning, drainage systems, and architectural abilities. Keeladi's constructed urban center implies a level of sophistication that was previously unrelated to South Indian prehistoric societies. The Keeladi discoveries upend preconceived notions about South India's early past, which has enormous historical relevance. The findings at Keeladi are of immense historical significance, as they challenge conventional assumptions about the early history of South India.

The Keeladi Civilization: Its Importance Trading and Connectivity

The presence of foreign artifacts, like as Roman amphorae and West Asian ceramics, points to a well-established trading network that linked Keeladi to other regions of the world at the time.Evidence of trade connections with other ancient civilizations is one among the remarkable discoveries of the Keeladi excavation. Roman coins, amphorae, and pieces of West Asian pottery, among other artifacts, show that Keeladi was not a solitary colony but was instead actively involved in trade with the Roman Empire and West Asian nations. This find highlights the global nature of ancient Indian societies by shedding information on the broad trading networks that predated it.

Cultural and Social Perspectives

Numerous objects have been discovered during the excavation at Keeladi, such as pottery, beads, terracotta figurines, iron tools, and jewelry, all of which provide important insights into the social and cultural aspects of the prehistoric civilisation. The presence of many pottery designs points to a multi-ethnic society, and the terracotta figurines and artifacts reveal information about the period's religious beliefs and aesthetic expressions.The presence of a sophisticated understanding of urban planning and sanitation principles is evidenced by the large drainage system. This shows that the Keeladi population was well-organized and had advanced engineering and urban planning skills.

Urban Planning and Architecture:

Keeladi's thoughtfully planned urban arrangement is one of the city's most remarkable features. The location exhibits signs of neatly planned residential neighborhoods, drainage systems, and streets, demonstrating a profound understanding of urban planning. There may have been multi-roomed buildings with brick foundations and tile roofs, according to the constructions discovered. The conventional wisdom that urban civilization in South India predominantly emerged along the banks of significant rivers like the Ganges and Indus has been called into question by the discoveries at Keeladi. The discovery made by Keeladi suggests that a sophisticated urban culture once existed in Tamil Nadu's Vaigai river basin.

Pottery and artifacts:

The excavation has produced a large number of objects that shed important light on the daily activities, trade, and cultural customs of the prehistoric inhabitants. The excavations turned up a wide variety of artifacts, including pottery, beads, jewelry, coins, and other items that provide light on the cultural customs and handiwork of the locals. The location also has well planned residential buildings, drainage systems, and streets, which are signs of a well-run urban population. At Keeladi, pottery with wonderful designs and craftsmanship has been a significant discovery. Black and red pottery, terracotta figurines, and megalithic graffiti symbols have all been discovered among the ceramics.

Script and Language

Some ceramic shards bear writing that resembles the historic Tamil Brahmi script. This script is still being decoded, and it has the potential to shed further light on the language and writing system that were in use throughout the Sangam era. The discovery of graffiti marks at Keeladi, which might be the first examples of Tamil script, is one of the site's most important discoveries. It is known as "Tamizhi." This has improved knowledge of the region's linguistic and literary development.

Cultural and Religious Practices:

Cultural and religious practices have also been revealed by the excavation, as shown by the existence of numerous figurines, clay lamps, and ritualistic objects. Important details concerning the agricultural techniques, religious beliefs, and creative representations of the ancient Tamil culture have been revealed by the studies about its socioeconomic and cultural components.

Archaeological Significance:

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Keeladi has been recognized as a site from the Sangam era, dating to the early historic period in South India. Between 300 BCE and 300 CE, a prominent period of Tamil literature and culture is known as the Sangam period. The excavations have been useful in illuminating the social, economic, and cultural systems of the prehistoric inhabitants of the area. The Sangam period, which is widely regarded as lasting from the third century BCE to the third century CE, is when the Keeladi site is thought to have originated, according to the archaeological evidence. In Tamil literature and culture history, this time period is noteworthy. The protection and preservation of India's cultural heritage have received attention as a result of the Keeladi discovery. The results emphasize the need for adequate archaeological site management and conservation to maintain its historical and educational significance. The most important discoveries were well-planned streets, residential areas, and proof of a sophisticated drainage system, all of which pointed to a sophisticated urban lifestyle. Particularly stunning was the pottery found at Keeladi, which displayed superb craftsmanship and offered important hints about the way of life, trade, and aesthetic traditions of the prehistoric Tamil people. The website also provided insightful data on trade connections with other prehistoric societies, such as the Roman and Greek civilizations. Scholars and archaeologists are still examining and analyzing the results of the ongoing excavations at Keeladi. The study could offer fresh perspectives on Tamil Nadu's history and South India's cultural heritage.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Keeladi archaeological excavation has been a crucial step in revealing Tamil Nadu's and India's pasts. It has improved our knowledge of early Indian history and the connections between ancient cultures in addition to shedding light on the ancient Tamil civilization. Finding the ruins of an ancient civilization that had been lost to the sands of history has been a fantastic voyage through time. Archaeologists have painstakingly worked to uncover the rich cultural history of the people who formerly lived in this area. The ancient civilization that flourished in the Tamil Nadu region has been viewed historically from a unique perspective thanks to the Keeladi archaeological dig. Our knowledge of early Indian societies, their degree of sophistication, and their interaction with other ancient civilizations through commerce have all been fundamentally altered by the finds revealed at the site. Our understanding of the past is being expanded by the excavation at Keeladi, which also provides us with a window into the social and cultural lives of our ancestors. It is anticipated that the significance of the site will be properly acknowledged and conserved for future generations as academics continue to pore over the layers of history at Keeladi. Such archaeological riches must be protected and valued in order for future generations to profit from the information and insights gleaned from these digs.

Acknowledgment

This research article is supported by RUSA 2.0 MHRD, INDIA in ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY (A State University Accredited with A+ Grade by NAAC (CGPA: 3.64) in the Third Cycle and Graded as Category-I University by MHRD-UGC, 2019: QS ASIA Rank-216, QS BRICS Rank-104, QS India Rank-20), Karaikudi-630 003.

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